

Not only did Fifine do her job, she brought a sense of kindness and consideration to an establishment more used to divisiveness and self-importance. Fifine would never let an opportunity to compliment riders of fifth floor elevator number five pass by. Her customary "You look nice today" would raise spirits and brighten moods even in the darkest of hours.

So often, those of us in the Capitol Hill community rush about our business and don't take a moment to reflect upon how great this institution is. Fifine kept this in mind every day. Her appreciation for her job and the U.S. Congress was second to none.

In an April 21, 1997 interview with the Washington Post, Fifine stated: "I love the congressmen," she said. "They have a lot of work to do and don't always have time to talk. I give them time to work, but I always talk to them. I love my job."

Fifine, we greatly appreciate you for taking the time to talk with us and thank you for a job well done. Our prayers and thoughts are with you and your family. We will miss you greatly.

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TRIBUTE TO MICHAEL DURHEN  
CHRISTIAN

**HON. ROBERT E. (BUD) CRAMER, JR.**

OF ALABAMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, March 4, 2003*

Mr. CRAMER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Lieutenant Commander Michael Durhen Christian. Michael was a prisoner of war in Vietnam from April 24, 1967, to March 4, 1973. Today marks the 30th anniversary of his release.

Mike was a highly decorated soldier, touting two Silver Stars, three Bronze Stars, four Air Medals, the Legion of Merit, and the Navy Commendation Medal. But perhaps what Michael is most well known for is the flag he made while in the Hao Lo POW Camp.

In the last year of his imprisonment, Mike began collecting bits of fabric. He fashioned a needle out of bamboo, used the thread from his blanket, and made an American flag that he sewed to the inside of his jacket. Mike's flag was a source of pride and comfort for many of the soldiers. Mike would hold up his flag, and they would salute.

When the guards at the POW Camp eventually found the flag, Mike was beaten and tortured for hours. When he was returned to the cell, Mike immediately gathered his remaining cloth and began to sew again. Leo Thorness, Congressional Medal of Honor recipient and survivor of the Hao Lo POW Camp stated "Now, whenever I see the flag, I think of Mike and the morning he first waved that tattered emblem of a nation. It was then, thousands of miles from home in a lonely prison cell, that he showed us what it is to be truly free."

Mike attended Butler High School in Alabama and still has family in our community. In September 1983, Mike lost his life in a house fire. Mr. Speaker, I am proud to recognize LCDR Christian today. His patriotism and service to this country serve as an example to all Americans.

INTRODUCTION OF BIKE  
COMMUTER ACT

**HON. EARL BLUMENAUER**

OF OREGON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, March 4, 2003*

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, today, Congressman MARK FOLEY and I are introducing legislation to extend commuter benefits to bicyclists. This important legislation includes bicycles in the definition of transportation covered by the qualified transportation fringe benefit.

Currently, employers may offer a Transportation Fringe Benefit to their employees for commuting to work. Employees who take advantage of this program may receive a tax exemption benefit totaling \$180 for participating in qualified parking plans or \$100 for transit or van-pool expenses. Employees may also opt to take cash compensation instead, which is subject to employment taxes. The Bike Commuter Act would extend these same Transportation Fringe Benefits to employees who choose to commute by bicycle.

It's time to level the playing field for bicycle commuters. Bicycling is one of the cleanest, healthiest and environmentally friendly modes of transportation that exists today. At a time when communities across the country are seeking to reduce traffic congestion, improve air quality, and increase the safety of their neighborhoods, bicycles offer a wonderful alternative to driving for the more than 50 percent of the working population who commute five miles or less to work. The Federal Government should do its part to support these goals by providing transportation benefits to people who choose to commute in a healthy, environmental, and neighborhood-friendly fashion.

According to the Bureau of Transportation Statistics, bicycles are second only to cars as a preferred mode of transportation, demonstrating their potential for commuter use. Many Americans own one or more bicycles, but limit their use to recreational purposes. This legislation is an important step in making the Federal Government a better partner for more livable communities.

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LETTER OF RESIGNATION BY  
JOHN BRADY KIESLING

**HON. FORTNEY PETE STARK**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, March 4, 2003*

Mr. STARK. Mr. Speaker I commend to the attention of my colleagues the following letter of resignation written by American diplomat John Brady Kiesling. Mr. Kiesling served in the U.S. State Department as Political Counselor at the American Embassy in Greece before resigning his post on Thursday, February 27—ending twenty years of public service. Mr. Kiesling's letter is an eloquent expression of principal in opposition to war with Iraq and America's heavy-handed approach to foreign policy under the leadership of President Bush.

US DIPLOMAT JOHN BRADY KIESLING,

*February 27, 2003.*

Secretary of State COLIN L. POWELL,  
Letter of Resignation.

ATHENS

DEAR MR. SECRETARY: I am writing you to submit my resignation from the Foreign Service of the United States and from my position as Political Counselor in U.S. Embassy Athens, effective March 7. I do so with a heavy heart. The baggage of my upbringing included a felt obligation to give something back to my country. Service as a U.S. diplomat was a dream job. I was paid to understand foreign languages and cultures, to seek out diplomats, politicians, scholars and journalists, and to persuade them that U.S. interests and theirs fundamentally coincided. My faith in my country and its values was the most powerful weapon in my diplomatic arsenal.

It is inevitable that during twenty years with the State Department I would become more sophisticated and cynical about the narrow and selfish bureaucratic motives that sometimes shaped our policies. Human nature is what it is, and I was rewarded and promoted for understanding human nature. But until this Administration it had been possible to believe that by upholding the policies of my president I was also upholding the interests of the American people and the world. I believe it no longer.

The policies we are now asked to advance are incompatible not only with American values but also with American interests. Our fervent pursuit of war with Iraq is driving us to squander the international legitimacy that has been America's most potent weapon of both offense and defense since the days of Woodrow Wilson. We have begun to dismantle the largest and most effective web of international relationships the world has ever known. Our current course will bring instability and danger, not security.

The sacrifice of global interests to domestic politics and to bureaucratic self-interest is nothing new, and it is certainly not a uniquely American problem. Still, we have not seen such systematic distortion of intelligence, such systematic manipulation of American opinion, since the war in Vietnam.

The September 11 tragedy left us stronger than before, rallying around us a vast international coalition to cooperate for the first time in a systematic way against the threat of terrorism. But rather than take credit for those successes and build on them, this Administration has chosen to make terrorism a domestic political tool, enlisting a scattered and largely defeated Al Qaeda as its bureaucratic ally. We spread disproportionate terror and confusion in the public mind, arbitrarily linking the unrelated problems of terrorism and Iraq. The result, and perhaps the motive, is to justify a vast misallocation of shrinking public wealth to the military and to weaken the safeguards that protect American citizens from the heavy hand of government. September 11 did not do as much damage to the fabric of American society as we seem determined to do to ourselves. Is the Russia of the late Romanovs really our model, a selfish, superstitious empire thrashing toward self-destruction in the name of a doomed status quo?

We should ask ourselves why we have failed to persuade more of the world that a war with Iraq is necessary. We have over the past two years done too much to assert to our world partners that narrow and mercenary U.S. interests override the cherished values of our partners. Even where our aims were not in question, our consistency is at issue. The model of Afghanistan is little comfort to allies wondering on what basis we plan to rebuild the Middle East, and in whose